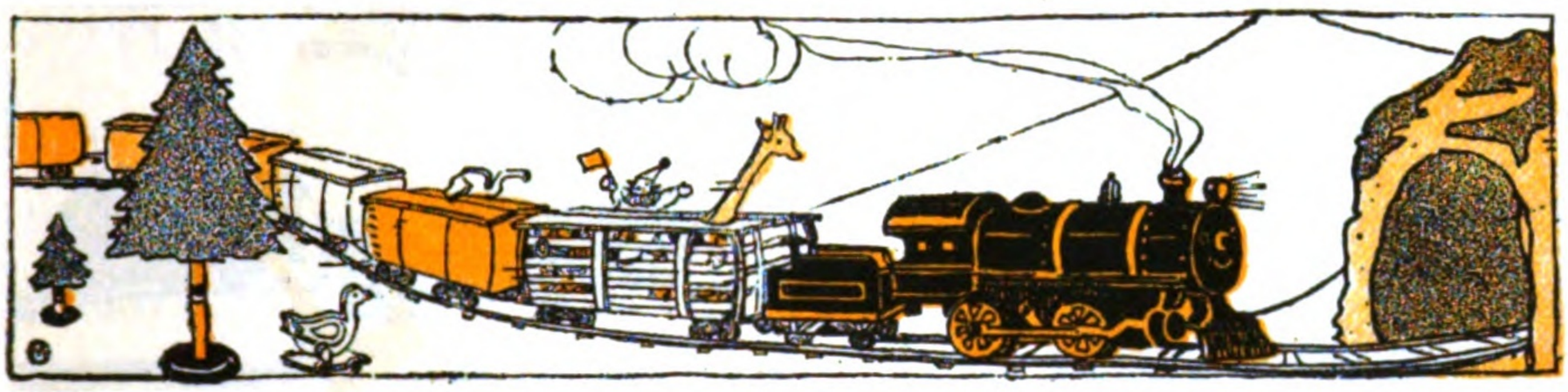

THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD*

Once there was a Train-of-Cars, and she was flying merrily across the country with a load of Christmas toys for the children who lived way over on the other side of the mountain. Her wheels went round ever so fast, squealing along on the track, and leaving the rails humming and singing behind them. Choo, choo! Choo, choo! Choo, choo! Choo, choo! She was such a happy little Train-of-Cars, so pleased with the load she was carrying, and she had just time to get to the end of her journey before the last Christmas shopping.

But all of a sudden, right at the foot of the mountain, Puff! Chug! Squeak! Squea-ea-eak! The Engine broke down; the wheels slid along a little farther with a shrieking, wailing cry and then stood perfectly still. Now how was the train to cross the mountain and get her toys over there in time for the children's Christmas?

*Retold from *The Pony Engine*, by Mabel C. Bragg. Used by the permission of George H. Doran Company.

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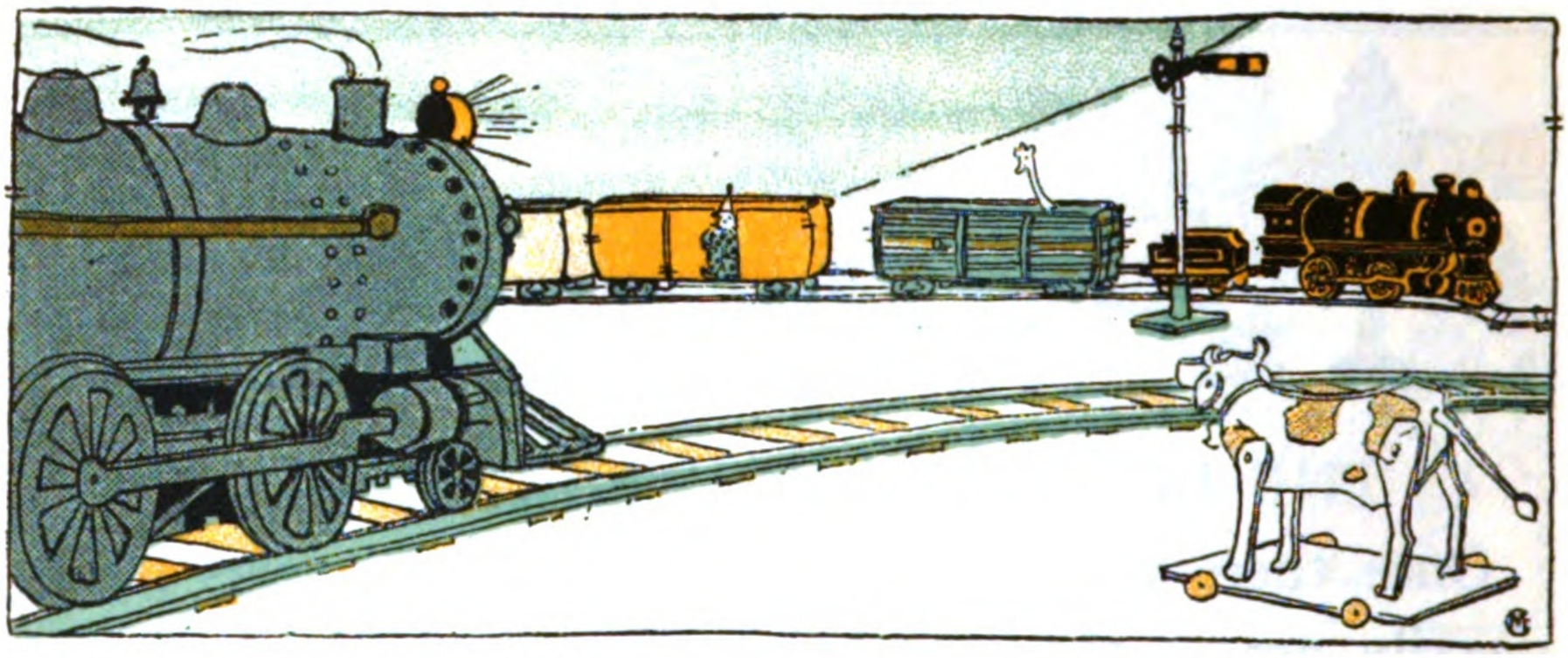

Rag dolls, paper dolls, china dolls, little worsted dogs with shoebutton eyes, and celluloid cats, and white fur bunnies, and painted wooden horses, and Noah's arks, and dolls' houses, and dolls' furniture, and rocking horses, and tops, and bats, and balls, and wagons, and carts! Were they all to stay there packed away useless, and the children on the other side to go without them for Christmas?

As the little Train stood there, hoping for help, along toward her came a great strong Engine, all finely cleaned up and black, with his number plate scoured and shining. He had just finished his work of pulling a fine long passenger train, with sleeping cars, parlor car, and dining car, and he was on his way back to the roundhouse now, puffing and blowing with pride.

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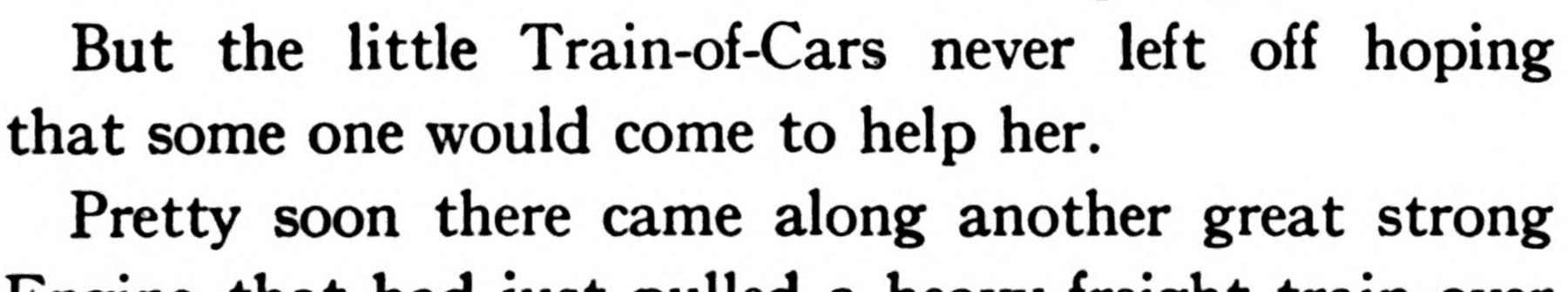
"O Big, Big Engine!" cried the Train, and every one of her Cars joined in the chorus, "Will you please take us over the mountain? Our engine has broken down, and we're loaded with Christmas toys for the children on the other side. Will you help us, help us, help us?"

But the Big Passenger Engine puffed and snorted and blew off steam angrily.

"It's not my business to pull such a little nobody as you!" he roared. "I pull much finer trains than you! Puff, Puff! Ding, dong! Wheu-eu-eu!" And he switched himself round on a sidetrack, passed the poor little Train-of-Cars and soon left her helpless, far behind.

But the little Train-of-Cars never left off hoping that some one would come to help her.

Pretty soon there came along another great strong Engine, that had just pulled a heavy freight train over the mountain, and was on his way back to the round-house to rest. So the little Train called out to the Freight Engine and every one of her Cars joined in the chorus:



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"O Big, Big Engine, will you please take us over the mountain? Our engine has broken down, and we're loaded with Christmas toys for the children on the other side. Will you help us, help us, help us?"

But the Big Freight Engine puffed and snorted more angrily than the other, and sent up out of his smokestack a shower of angry sparks.

"I've done enough work for today! Yes-s-s S-s-sir-ee!" he hissed, "I've done enough, done enough, done enough, done enough, done enough, done enough!" And he switched himself round on the sidetrack, passed the poor little Train-of-Cars, and soon left her helpless, far behind!

But the little Train-of-Cars never left off hoping that some one would come to help her.

Pretty soon there came along a smaller Engine, just about the size of the one that had been pulling the Train. He looked dingy and rusty and dusty, and he didn't puff at all. He just sighed, and groaned, and grunted, and rumbled, and grumbled! But the little Train called out to him and every one of her Cars joined in the chorus:

"O Engine, Engine, will you please take us over the mountain? Our engine has broken down and

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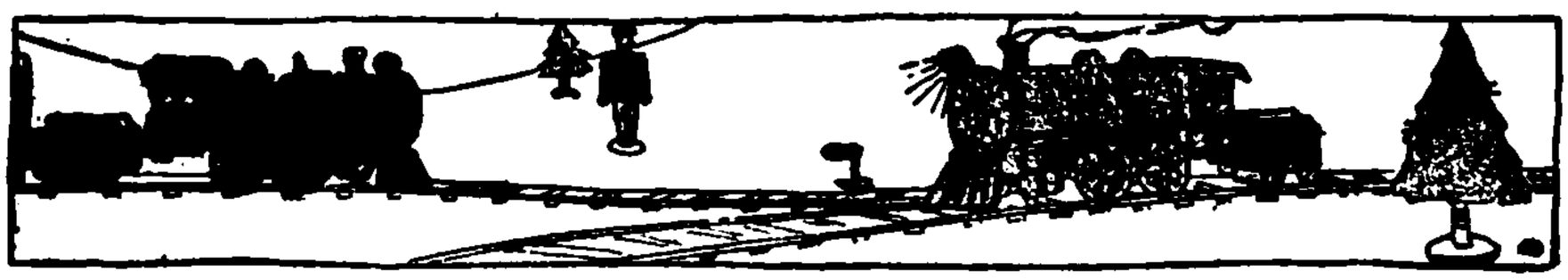

we're loaded with Christmas toys for the children on the other side? Will you help us, help us, help us?"

Then the Dingy, Dusty, Rusty Engine groaned, and grunted, and rumbled, and grumbled:

"I never could pull you over the mountain! I haven't the strength! I never—could! I never—could! I never—could! I never could! I never could! I never could!" And he dragged himself round on the sidetrack, passed the poor little Train-of-Cars and soon left her helpless, far behind!

Still the little Train-of-Cars never left off hoping that some one would come to help her.

After a long, long time, along came a Little, Small Engine. It seemed quite useless to ask this Little, Small Engine for help, yet the Little, Small Engine had one very bright, lively eye in her head, and she was humming and hurrying along, whistling and ringing her bell in the very liveliest fashion.

So the little Train cried out, and every one of her Cars joined in the chorus:

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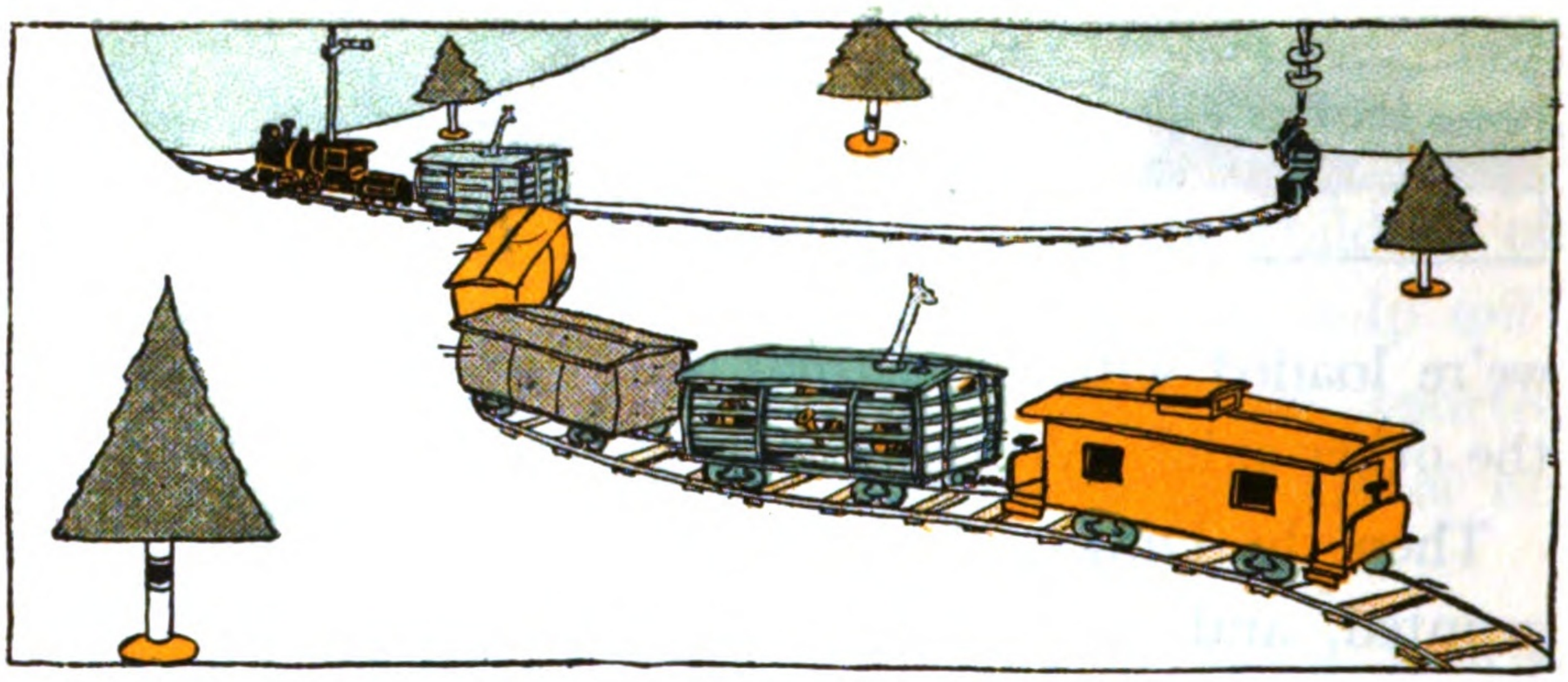

"Little Engine, could you take us over the mountain? Our engine has broken down, and we're loaded with Christmas toys for the children on the other side. Can you help us, help us, help us?"

Now the Little, Small Engine had never been far away from the freight yard, where she had spent all her days in switching, but she did not mean to let those children go without their Christmas toys if she could possibly help it, so she answered:

"I think I can! I think I can! I think I can!"

Then she came straight up to the Train, caught hold of her, and began to tug and pull. Pretty soon, Ding, dong! ding, dong! Puff, puff, puff! Chug, chug, chug! The Train-of-Cars began to move, slowly, slowly. And the Little, Small Engine as she toiled, kept puffing:

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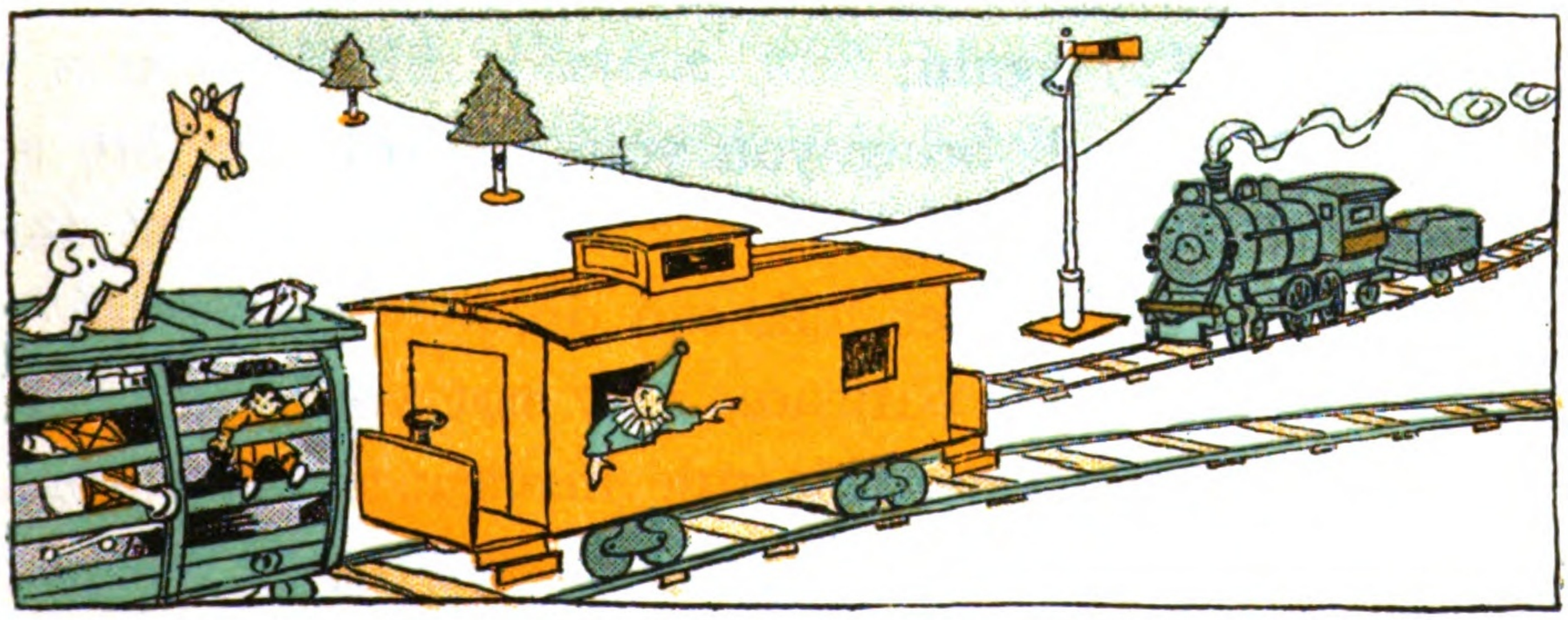
"I — think — I — can! I — think — I — can! I —think — I — can!" Slowly, steadily, she gained speed. "I – think – I can! I – think – I – can! I – think – I – can!" Now she ran steadily up the track. "I think I can! I think I can! I think I can! I think I can! I think I can! I think I can!"

At last she reached the top of the mountain and then she puffed out joyously, "*I THOUGHT I COULD!*"

There, below on the other side lay a great, big city, the city where the children lived to whom she was bearing the Christmas toys.

Down she started, sliding faster, faster, faster, and as she went she sang merrily, "I thought I could! I thought I could! I thought I could! I thought I could! I thought I could! I thought



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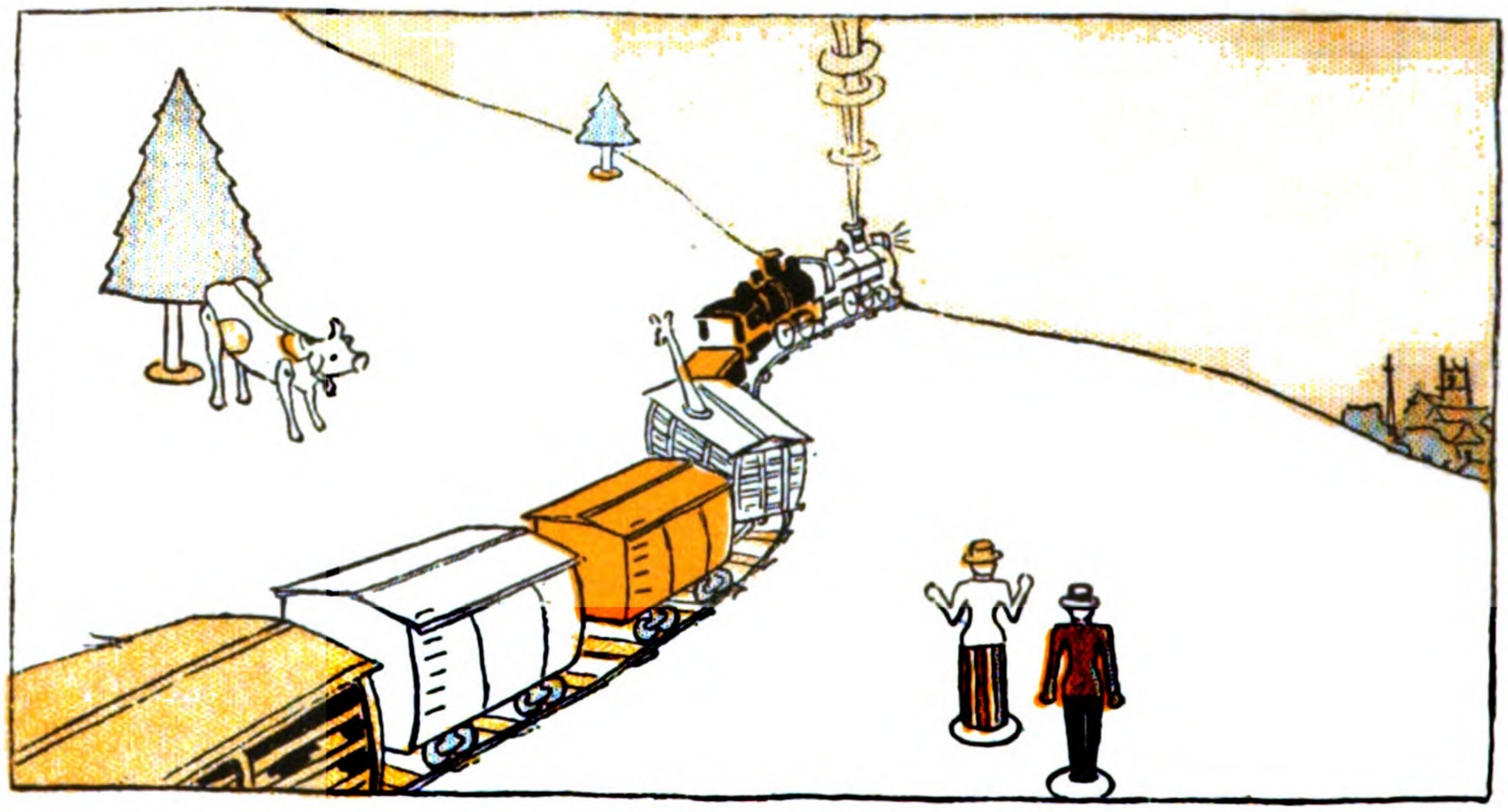

I could! I thought I could! I thought I could! I thought I could, I thought I could, I thought I could!"

And so the children got their Christmas toys.

TRY AGAIN

If you find your task is hard,
Try again;
Time will bring you your reward,
Try again;
All that other folk can do,
Why, with patience, may not you?
Only keep this rule in view,
Try again. —*William E. Hickson.*

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